

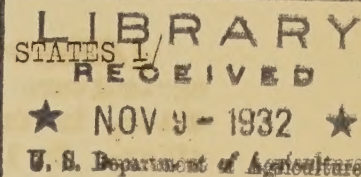
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THE CHALLENGE TO RURAL SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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Present interest in rural sociological research and education is an outgrowth of the report of the Commission on Country Life, made early in 1909. In appointing the Commission, President Roosevelt made a significant statement that holds good today. He said: "It is at least as important that the farmer should get the largest possible return in money, comfort, and social advantages from the crops he grows, as that he should get the largest possible return in crops from the land he farms. Agriculture is not the whole of country life. The great rural interests are human interests, and good crops are of little value to the farmer unless they open the door to a good kind of life on the farm." To discover and evaluate the essentials of human advancement, and to join forces with other constructive minds in the task of helping rural people to attain and enjoy them, is the challenge with which the rural sociologists of the United States are confronted. This challenge must be met in a spirit of fidelity to scientific processes of reasoning and of devotion to the cause of rural human achievement. That it will be met in this spirit, the evidence gathered in connection with the preparation of this paper is assuring.

Growing Social Complexities

An appreciation of the growing complexity of rural social problems and the necessity for their more intensive scientific study may be gained from a comparison of rural conditions as they existed in 1909 with those now existing. Then, the Commission complained of the evils of land speculation and the competition of industry for farm labor. Now, the general complaint is of depressed land values and unemployment. Then, there was a demand for the reclamation of swamp and arid lands; whereas, today, the question is what to do with surplus acreages, especially submarginal cultivated lands. In 1909, the solution of production problems was emphasized in part because better yields and better products were wanted and in part because of the general assumption that if more and better products could be produced at lower costs, markets would be forthcoming from an increasing and advancing world population. Now, and for some years past, the country has been suffering from surpluses and low prices brought on by increasing capacity to produce, on the one hand, and reduced purchasing power of consumers, on the other. The economic and social needs of the day are adjustments of production to the requirements of consumption, better distribution, and more capable consumers of the products of agriculture and industry.

1/ Paper prepared for presentation before the subsection of experiment station work of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities at its meeting in Washington, in November, 1932.

Along with changes in the nature of the economic problems confronting agriculture have come certain forms of technical and social advancement which, in themselves, present perplexing problems for the Nation to consider. In 1909, for example, farmers traveled and hauled their products over rough roads in horse-drawn vehicles whereas, now, they travel over an ever-expanding mileage of good roads in motor-drawn vehicles. Then, the Commission called attention to the need for better rural instruction, elementary, collegiate, and extension. Not only have great improvements been made in the schools themselves, but cooperative extension, movies, and radio have become important forces in agricultural education. The problem now is for the research forces to supply the instructional forces with the different kinds of information needed to help rural people make farming more pleasant and profitable and rural life more significant and satisfactory.

As a result of the changes that have come about, the Nation is now confronted with a very different set of rural problems from those which prevailed back in 1909. With arable land now relatively more abundant than then; with advances in transportation, communication and education; and with improvements in standards of living, rural life has become progressively more complex and closely interwoven with urban life. In the meantime, the capacity of the Nation to produce the necessities and comforts of life has clearly outrun its capacity to live and enjoy them to the fullest extent. Of constantly increasing significance, therefore, are the distinctly non-economic, human problems as factors conditioning national progress.

Depression a Spur to Creative Thought

The increasing perplexity of these human problems, which characterize an advancing civilization, has been brought home to the people of the United States during the present depression. These problems have baffled the very best minds of the Nation, the leaders as well as the laymen of science, statesmanship, agriculture, industry, finance, and trade. As in previous depressions, pessimism and fear of the outcome prevailed for a time. There were those who longed for the "good old days", when civilization was more self-sufficient, simpler, and everybody allegedly contented and happy. Fortunately, however, there are many who would simplify the complexities confronting the Nation, not by yielding to the forces of depression, but rather by giving them serious study and coming to understand them better. They would profit from the experience gained in wrestling with present difficulties and use past achievements as stepping-stones to further progress. They would subordinate the productive resources and creative capacities of the Nation less to the profit motive and more to that of the general welfare. Offsetting to a certain extent, therefore, the distress that it has wrought, the depression has made certain contributions to national progress. It has stimulated creative thought, focused it more distinctly upon the problems of human welfare, and emphasized the need for economic and social planning to forestall disaster and assure a more continuous prosperity.

These forward-looking forces feel that they are beginning to find a way out of hard times. Fears are beginning to be dispelled and hopes revived. Confidence in the future of the United States is again being restored. As has happened so often in the past, the capacity of the Nation to overcome obstacles is again rising to the level of present emergencies. This experience in dealing with the forces of retrogression emphasizes the fact that economic, political, educational, and moral forms of advancement must go hand in hand. National progress comes not of its own accord but as a result of courage and determination, constructive thought and concerted action. It comes not uniformly but by a succession of achievements interspersed with reverses, in which the advances outdistance the retreats.

The ebbs and flows of national progress, with its lulls and storms, cross currents and undertows, naturally affect the people on the land as well as the people in the offices, factories, and shops. When, for example, as is now the case, so large a proportion of farmers are in debt and without income sufficient to meet their obligations and living expenses, and when the prices they receive for the products they sell are disproportionately lower than the prices they pay for the things they buy, rural standards of living recede to lower levels, industry loses a large part of its home market, urban life suffers from unemployment and dwindling incomes, and national progress is retarded.

Evidently, therefore, the Nation has not as yet made the most of its creative talent. The material progress which it has achieved is merely suggestive of the cultural, intellectual, moral, and spiritual progress that may be gained by better thinking and better vision of the possibilities of the human resources of this country. Though the Nation generally finds a way out of depression and then climbs to new and higher levels of achievement, it is too much inclined to accept as inevitable the consequences of scaling the heights and descending to the depths of the business cycle. Heretofore, too little has been done toward cutting down the peaks and filling in the valleys and thus smoothing the way to a more continuous progress. This progress will undoubtedly be greatly facilitated when the Nation learns more about when to apply the brakes as well as when to "step on the gas". This greater lesson in planning for national prosperity and human welfare will come from more adequate programs of research in which the social viewpoint is more clearly envisioned.

Research Progressively Evolves

The institutions of agricultural research and education, being publicly supported, tend to comply with the needs of agriculture as expressed in legislation. In the early stages of agricultural research, farmers were primarily concerned with problems pertaining to the improvement of their farms and their methods of farming. The outstanding need was for better varieties of crops and types of livestock, better knowledge of soils and fertilizers, better methods of feeding, better tools, implements and machinery, and better control of insect pests and diseases. In those days, when farmers were depressed, they knew something was wrong but did not realize that the price-making forces were susceptible of scientific study.

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Accordingly, they usually sought political remedies. They hoped that prices next year or later on would thus be made better and farming would again become profitable.

Then came a better vision of the nature of economic problems affecting agriculture and of their solution. Farmers began to look forward to better business methods in production and marketing as aids to incomes. Then, to the staff of research chemists, agronomists, animal husbandmen, horticulturists, entomologists, pathologists, and the like, were added the farm management, marketing, and other specialists now well known in agricultural economics. Thus a social science joined forces with the physical and biological sciences in the task of helping rural people farm better, earn better incomes, and live better lives.

Rural Problems Must be Anticipated

In addition to the study of current problems, the research agencies have learned by experience that it is necessary for them to anticipate the needs of rural people in advance of their expressed demand. As rural people have grown in their appreciation of the nature of the problems confronting them and of the effectiveness of the sciences in solving these problems, the research agencies have invariably found or developed appropriate talent to discover the new types of information required. Otherwise, science would be the follower instead of the leader of rural progress.

In anticipation of these needs, rural life studies were launched somewhat in advance of the time when any large proportion of the masses realized that sociological problems were subject to scientific interpretation. Gradually, however, the forces of rural education, especially the extension services, awakened an interest in the essentials of better rural living. Farm and home economists, county agents, and others interested the men, women, and children on the farms in better farming, better incomes--real and monetary, better homes, better equipment, better clothing for the same or less money, better orchards and gardens, more and better home-processed meats, fruits and vegetables, better educational advantages, and better participation in community activities through rural clubs, cooperative organizations, schools, churches, and the local press.

This actual experience in better rural living has created new hopes and aspirations on the part of the people and new demands for still higher standards and planes of rural life. Enjoying more and more of the good things of life, they have become less inclined to accept as inevitable and fatal the lowered standards of living exacted of them by the forces of depression. They strive for better incomes, not merely for the purpose of accumulating wealth but, rather, that they may participate more fully in all that contributes to the national growth. This desire on the part of rural people to advance, in turn, has created a real need on the part of the research agencies for the services of still another type of creative specialist, an expert in rural life, a rural social engineer.

Rural Sociology Comes of Age

L. H. Bailey and others had earlier made, or encouraged to be made, more or less informal rural life studies here and there, but the pioneer project in rural sociology at an agricultural experiment station was, doubtless, the social survey of Walworth County, Wis., begun by C. J. Galpin for the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station in 1911. This study resulted in the publication of Research Bulletin No. 34 of that station entitled "The Social Anatomy of an Agricultural Community", in May, 1915. With the Wisconsin station until 1919 and thereafter in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Dr. Galpin and his associates, through cooperation with State workers, have rendered valuable services to the cause of rural life study in the United States.

As late as 1919, only two State station sociological projects, one from Wisconsin, and the other from West Virginia, were listed by the Office of Experiment Stations. It was in that year that the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life was created in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics; though some rural life work had previously been conducted by the old Bureau of Markets. Six years later, 1924-25, the Office of Experiment Stations reported 34 active projects, which it classified as rural sociology. Needless to say, these projects were preliminary and exploratory, and, in fact, of such a nature that many of them would now be classed as farm economics, rural education, and other kinds of work. That year, the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life, B. A. E., reported studies of farm population, including the movement to and from farms, and the farmers' standard of living; whereas, on July 1, 1932, the Division reported 25 projects under way. A few projects, probably less than a dozen, in this field are under way at independent institutions.

It was also in 1925 that impetus was given research in the social sciences at the State experiment stations by the passage of the Purnell Act. Definite progress will be found not so much in percentage increase in projects since 1925 as in research experience for the workers themselves and refinements of projects, methods, and procedures. In 1925-26, the first year of the Purnell funds in the States, the Office of Experiment Stations listed 43 projects in rural sociology. Six years later, September 26, 1932, the number listed amounted to 49 projects distributed among 23 stations. Of these, nine projects at six stations were on the subject of rural population; 19 projects at 14 stations on social groups, organizations, and institutions; seven projects at seven stations on standards of living; 12 projects at 9 stations on community trends; and two projects at two stations on rural social psychology.

On these projects it is estimated that about \$105,000, or slightly less than \$2,500 per project, will be expended during the present fiscal year. Of this amount, slightly more than \$92,000 is from the Purnell fund, more than \$12,000 from State funds, and about \$800 from other sources. These figures for 1931-32 compare with more than \$35,000 Purnell funds and more than \$9,000 State funds in 1930-31. The increase for 1931-32 over the previous year amounts, therefore, to about \$7,000 Purnell and \$3,000 State funds.

As leading authorities in this field see the situation, rural life problems have grown in both intensity and complexity out of all proportion to the research devoted to their solution. They emphasize the necessity for more thoroughgoing studies in this field. They believe that the demand for quick results and hastily-drawn plans for economic and social improvements, without better support for long-time fundamental research will, in the long run, defeat its own purpose. They contend that, though the problems in this field are perplexing, they are not insurmountable and, with recent increases in the number of well-trained men, there is every reason to anticipate that consistent effort to throw light on the non-technical, human needs of rural people will lead to the discovery of information highly essential to national welfare.

When evaluated by the same standards by which the physical and biological applications of agriculture are judged, they believe that rural sociological research, in the development of method, the study of problems, and the results secured, has already more than justified the moral and financial support given it to date. When one views the relative paucity of scientific information concerning the increasingly perplexing problems of rural life, it is difficult to escape the feeling that many of them, especially the larger problems of rural economic and social policy and welfare, are not receiving the scientific consideration which their importance merits.

For the fact that rural sociological research has grown very slowly, there seems to be no one in particular to blame. The difficulties encountered in the development of this field seem to be inherent in the nature of the obstacles to be overcome. The public, including rural people, administrative authorities and legislative bodies, had to be convinced of its merits; funds secured; talent developed; problems visualized; and methods of data-gathering, analysis, and interpretation evolved. In fact, much remains to be accomplished in these regards.

Just now, when efforts are being made to balance budgets, all types of research are being subjected to the closest of scrutiny. Sociological research especially, being less mature and consequently less understood, will be challenged to demonstrate its practicability in the matter of improving rural life. For this reason, it is well to survey the successes and failures of rural sociological research in the United States up to the present time, and, if possible, make it more practical and useful.

It must not be inferred, however, that rural sociological research has not made headway. As a matter of fact, it is making more progress than is generally recognized. Sociology, the parent science that is being applied to rural life problems, is in a state of transition from its period of exploration to that of scientific discovery and development. In many respects, its history parallels that of the other sciences. Gradually, its constructive minds are overcoming the obstacles of prejudice and slavish adherence to traditional notions and views, which long impeded the progress of the pioneers in the physical and biological fields. They have adopted the scientific method as the most trustworthy means of arriving at the truths of society and have made a good beginning in the effective use of it.

The First Essential

The first essential to success in rural sociological research is a more adequate methodology for the collection and analysis of social data. One of the best indications that the rural sociologists are making real progress in this direction is the fact that in recent years they have held a number of conferences for the specific purpose of exchanging views upon research methods and procedures. It is encouraging to note that at these conferences the specialists in this field have faced the difficult problems confronting them fairly and squarely. Frankly recognizing the elusiveness of social truths, they are giving serious consideration to the matter of devising ways and means of arriving at dependable conclusions. In this respect, they are but following in the footsteps of their physical and biological antecedents. Exercising a detached sort of dual mentality, they are challenging the very processes of reasoning which they as scientists are employing in their researches.

It is interesting to observe that in other respects the rural sociologists have become their own severest critics. In response to a recent request for their views concerning the status of their science, they observed that probably too many of their own number evidenced an over-fondness for statistical method, especially multiple correlations, and too frequently employ them as means of presentation instead of their more logical use as means of interpretation. They expressed the further view that a superstructure of sociological literature, however valid and sociologically useful it may be, has been reared upon inadequate foundations of scientific research; that too much of this literature consists largely of descriptive facts and figures and "technical" sociological language; and that too much is frequently assumed of the reader's ability to digest and assimilate the intellectual nourishment served. Fortunately, however, these criticisms do not apply to an increasing proportion of the books and bulletins now coming off the press. ^{2/}

For the reason that the sociologist is dealing with human beings as they are, he cannot set up a controlled social experiment as one might in the chemical or biological laboratory and follow it through to its logical conclusion. He cannot simulate the procedure of the chemist by breaking down complex social groups, such as families, cooperative agencies, and other social organizations and institutions, into their elements and later recombining them into new and better products. These facts, however, do not detract in the least from the merits of sociological research. The difficulties of the chemist in the measurement of extremely small particles of matter may prove to be as fruitful of error as the difficulties of the sociologist in the evaluation of large social complexes. The sociologist, no less than the chemist, has recourse to methods of analysis and synthesis of data gathered from the material studied.

^{2/} When, and when not, to resort to statistical method, particularly multiple correlations, is amply discussed in current literature by such authorities as Tolley, Ezekiel, Waugh, Court, Bruce, Reineke, Burt, Warren, and many others. For some references on interpretation of social data, see Appendix II.

Slowly but surely the sociologists are making progress in the matter of isolating their elementary units of study and seeing how these social elements react upon each other and combine into complex social groups. They are beginning to isolate some of the products and byproducts of social reactions, economic, political, cultural, and spiritual. They are beginning to discern social tendencies which may in time be explained by general principles and laws.

Thus far, the rural sociologists have centered their efforts primarily upon methods and procedures employed in the solution of those types of social phenomena which can be measured quantitatively by the use of mathematical yardsticks. These phenomena represent mainly the economic, political, educational, and spiritual bases, or the machinery, facilities, and routine of life, rather than the essential quality, richness, or fullness of life itself. Transcending in importance the more tangible, measureable phenomena are the unseen, but none the less real, cultural, aesthetic, and emotional values of human life, which cannot be gauged by existing scientific standards. Because they will probably not pass through statistical mills, there are those who feel that these more distinctly human problems, involving social and psychological factors, are things which must work themselves out and that they lie beyond the realm of science. However, the sociologist believes that these problems of human behavior are the most important ones because the most difficult; and that, if they cannot be solved, the limits of progress of this gigantic summation of human cooperation, called society, are very clearly discernible.

To perform the highest type of rural sociological research, therefore, it becomes urgent that the specialists in this field develop new and more suitable concepts for the evaluation of the intangible forces and values of life, which cannot be counted numerically, which money cannot buy, and which are believed by many to be especially susceptible of enhancement among people living in appropriate rural settings.

The difficulties besetting rural sociologists, however, should not discourage a research agency from initiating work in this field. Their viewpoint, intuition, and imagination will be found highly valuable wherever rural human interests are at issue. In their researches, they can gather facts, analyze and interpret them in scientific fashion, and present their conclusions in readable language to the public, which, for some time to come, will doubtless insist upon conducting its social experiments in its own way, without controls, and with the usual interference of opposing interests. There is every reason to believe, however, that public experiments designed to improve the economic and social position of rural people will result in higher averages of success when those who conduct them have before them for guidance a more complete body of scientific social information.

The Second Essential

The second essential is to determine the field and establish its metes and bounds. In distinguishing this scientific field from the others, the purpose is not to build a Chinese wall around it that would cut off communication with related fields. Instead, the purpose is, first of all, to focus the creative resources of rural sociologists upon the solution of their own appropriate problems.

The suggestion to find one's own field and to stay well within it would seem unnecessary except for the fact that some leading sociologists and economists concerned with rural problems express the view that, for one reason or another, some rural sociologists, instead of maintaining their own viewpoint and focusing their energies upon their own objectives, are really doing scientific chores for the agricultural economist, the home economist, and the psychologist. These men hold that the economic aspects of the farm, the home, the family, standards of living including income and cost, farmers' organizations, and boys' and girls' clubs fall in this "chore" class; that the technical and economic phases involved can be dealt with to better advantage by the technologist and the farm or home economist; and that the sociological viewpoint, so essential in all economic endeavor, can be assured by the maintenance of intimate cooperative relations, in which the specialists do not swap places but each contributes the viewpoint of the field in which his talent works to best advantage.

The sociologist, of course, is not a physicist, a biologist, an economist, a political scientist, or a theologian but, if he is properly oriented, he has a working knowledge of the fields covered by other specialists and an appreciation of their respective contributions to the betterment of rural life. If he possesses a clear vision of his opportunities as a scientist, he will ever remain faithful to the sociological viewpoint, cooperate fully with specialists in related fields, and make a highly valuable contribution to agricultural research by taking people rather than things, human values rather than monetary values, as the point of departure in the construction of economic and social policies, plans, and programs designed to bring about rural progress.

The Third Essential

The third essential to success in rural sociological research is the selection of the more important problems for study. As in the case of the older divisions of effort, rural sociology is confronted with infinitely more problems than can be dealt with effectively. These problems vary in importance from the merely interesting to those the solution of which is essential to rural progress. They must be found and arrayed in the order of their relative importance and only one or a few of the more weighty ones selected for intensive study. This procedure saves time and money, and, by obviating the criticism that some projects under way are of minor importance and scattered over too broad a territory, tends to inspire confidence in rural sociological research.

Studies of Population

When rural sociological research is initiated in a State or a Nation, studies of a preliminary or exploratory character are often advantageous. Rural life surveys, for example, bring to light many problems well worthy of intensive research. From census to census, the composition of farm population must be determined and compared with rural non-farm and urban populations. Migration of people to and from farms must be studied periodically and the characteristics of the migrants compared with those of the people who remain in the rural and urban districts. In this connection, human ecology, or the relation of people to habitat, must be given scientific consideration.

The probable social effects of rural environment and of rural-urban migrations upon rural life and national destinies raise some vitally important questions for the sociologist to answer. For example, are the assumptions really valid that civilization began, and will probably end, with agriculture; that the family farm is the bulwark of representative government; that the rural family is essential to the preservation of American ideals of peace and protection, law and order, social justice and national welfare, human liberty and cultural progress?

If these typically American assumptions are sound, it becomes highly important that the agencies for agricultural research definitely determine whether or not rural-urban migrations are selective and, if so, to what extent and why. What social effects do changes in the trends of industrial and commercial activity have upon rural progress? Are those who remain on the farm, and those who remove from the city to the country, less capable of producing the number and character of men and women that are essential to national greatness?

If, as is so generally assumed, rural people are in some way essential to national greatness, what is it about them, or their environment, that makes them so? Is it merely because they produce the Nation's supplies of the raw materials for food and clothing and consume the products of industry, or is it something more fundamental than these contributions to national well-being? Is rural environment the natural breeding-ground of strong bodies and minds, and are the more densely-populated urban centers the places where humanity wears itself out at work or leisure? If these premises be true, what steps should society take to preserve and improve upon the physical and intellectual fecundity and prepotency of rural population?

John Stuart Mill thought that social interests suffered when population became too crowded, even though well provided with the necessities and comforts of life. Evidently, he also thought that there was something socially advantageous about rural environment. He said that "solitude, in the sense of being often alone, is essential to any depth of meditation or of character; and solitude in the presence of natural beauty and grandeur, is the cradle of thoughts and aspirations which are not only good for the individual, but which society could ill do without. . . . If the earth must lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extirpate from it, for the mere purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but not a better or a happier population, I sincerely hope, for the sake of posterity, that they will be content to be stationary, long before necessity compels them to it." ^{3/}

Rural Social Psychology

Prerequisite, also, to attacks upon rural life problems proper is an understanding of rural social psychology. In this subfield the problem

^{3/} John Stuart Mill, Principles of Political Economy, v. II, Second Edition, London: John W. Parker, West Strand, 1849, p. 313.

to be studied is not one of individual psychology but rather the relation of individuals to groups of all kinds. Included are studies of membership relations problems of rural organizations, attitude and opinion studies, and the behavior and participation of farm people with regard to rural organizations of all kinds. It does not include studies of individual organizations or types of organizations.

Rural Groups

The bulk of the projects which would lead to the improvement of rural life deals with rural groups, organizations, and institutions and their interrelationships. In these studies, the rural family occupies the central position. Studies of the family comprise standards and planes of living from the sociological, rather than the economic or home economic viewpoint, the uses of leisure time of the different members of the family, and many other complementary studies.

The point of view to be maintained by the rural sociologists in the study of rural groups is their contribution to better living rather than their technical and economic advantages. It would be well to determine, for example, in 4-H club work and farmers' cooperative marketing organizations, whether those who participate in them are gaining in human values or merely learning to produce and market in the hope of profits. Farmers' organizations generally might be greatly benefited if especially studied from the sociological as well as the economic viewpoint. Their continued rise and fall is a matter of common knowledge. Many sociologists insist that, in the very nature of the case, few farmers' organizations can persist for long if organized solely on the basis of the profit motive. Since, in large organizations, the "we" point of view is so readily lost, and since in the long run no organization can guarantee profits, permanent farmers' organizations must appeal to other motives in addition to that of profit. This aspect, together with the ever-present problem of membership relations, provides a fertile field in which the rural sociologists should have something to contribute.

An agricultural economist of recognized standing would have the rural sociologists also answer the following questions: When is land that is submarginal to commercial production under given economic conditions submarginal also to human beings, especially those who persist in living on it and farming it primarily for purposes of self-sufficiency? Why do so many men prefer the frontiers, the hills, and the arid places to the more thickly-settled and generally more prosperous districts? It may be a serious mistake in many cases to establish policies of land utilization in so-called submarginal areas solely on the basis of soil productivity, to ignore their attractiveness to rural people, and thus to deliberately cut off large sections of the only portion of our society which still possesses normal reproductive functions. Let the rural sociologists develop the facts so that, in the evolution of land utilization policies, the human interests will in no case be subordinated to the commercial.

Another question somewhat related to the preceding, which the rural sociologists should answer, is to what extent human welfare is being sacri-

ficed by the unbridled operation of the profit system in industry and finance and to what extent rural life suffers from the profit motive in commercialized agriculture. Increasing numbers of people hold the view that agricultural, industrial, financial, commercial, and professional life in the United States is capable of providing the Nation with many of the essentials to human welfare over and above their contributions in terms of goods and services and that the sociologist should discover, or probably rediscover, the forces of rural and urban enterprise and life which contribute to human values and thus help the Nation as a whole to seek them rather than subordinate them largely to the profit motive.

If such social information as is here suggested were gathered and more generally disseminated, not only among rural but also among urban elements of the population, there is little question that public sentiment would become more enlightened upon the subject of the mutuality of social responsibility and interest, which should prevail among the several vocational and professional groups which constitute the Nation. Such information would contribute much to the social philosophy of the Nation, and this, in turn, would be reflected in national policies affecting agriculture and rural life.

Was Mill divining present-day tendencies in the United States when he said, "Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture ploughed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture." ^{4/} Thus, it appears that rural sociologists can help the institutions of agriculture education influence the Nation in the rededication of its material resources to the cause of human well-being and happiness.

Rural Social "Pathology"

In rural sections where subnormal or abnormal social conditions prevail, social pathological studies are in order. These include social surveys of retarded or handicapped rural areas; studies of rural delinquency, crime, and degeneracy; and studies of rural destitution, including poor relief and other forms of aid to underprivileged, poverty-stricken, subnormal and otherwise unfortunate persons and families. In these studies, areal pathological conditions are stressed rather than particular organizations or groups operating in the area.

In this connection, there is evidently need in many sections for the study of agricultural destitution. The depression is causing a good deal of poverty with people who are on the land. Right now, there is a pressing

^{4/} - See footnote reference p.10.

demand for facts as to who these people are and why. This is an immediate reconstruction problem growing out of the depression. It is believed that a continuing program of sociological researches would yield needed information not only on pathological problems but also on rural psychology and the successes and failures of farmers' organizations and social institutions in different types of farming areas of a State.

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Thus it appears that there is no lack of vitally important problems pertaining to rural welfare, which present themselves for study. In the past, the presumption has been that if farmers could secure better incomes through better farming, their living problems would solve themselves. Experience, however, has proven that this is to a considerable extent a fallacious presumption. Instead of rural life problems solving themselves during the past quarter of a century, they have actually grown progressively more grave and complex. It is now coming to be more generally realized than ever before that these problems must be studied scientifically if the human interests of rural people are to be advanced and the contributions of agriculture and rural life to national advancement are to be maintained and improved upon. It is coming to be recognized, also, that though these human problems present in many respects greater difficulties of solution than the physical and biological, they are not beyond the pale of scientific study. An ever-increasing number of capable scientific specialists in rural sociology are slowly but surely gaining a mastery over their obstacles. They are also getting a better vision of their field and of the relative importance of the problems presenting themselves for solution. During the past five years, they have made noteworthy progress in the matter of developing satisfactory methods and procedures to be employed in research. In the pioneer work that they have performed and the results which they have thus far obtained, they have rendered a service to society that is well worth while.

Thus, it appears that rural sociological research, if clearly conceived and wisely conducted, should greatly strengthen the position of the institutions of agricultural research and education in the United States in their efforts to promote both rural advancement and national welfare.

Appendix I

The following classification of studies in the field of rural sociology was prepared by the Division of Rural Life, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. D. A.

1. Population

- a. Composition and characteristics of the farm population and comparisons with rural non-farm and urban populations.
- b. Migration of people to and from farms, including the characteristics of the migrants and of those who remain.
- c. Human ecology.

2. Rural organizations, groups, and institutions, social services, and their interrelationships.

a. The family.

- A. Standards and planes of living (in work, recreation, and leisure).
- B. Other sociological studies of the rural family.

b. The school and other educational services.

c. The church and its constituent organizations.

d. Local government in its sociological aspects.

e. The press and other literature on rural life.

f. Farmers' organizations of all kinds, in their sociological aspects, including:

- A. Fraternal orders
- B. Community clubs
- C. General farmers' organizations, farm bureau, farmers' union, etc.
- D. Parent-teacher associations, school improvement organizations, etc.
- E. Rural young people's organizations
- F. Business organizations of all kinds
- G. Recreational groups and activities, not otherwise classified

g. Public and private health and welfare agencies and services.

h. Town-country relationships, including comparative social advantages of rural and urban areas.

- i. Neighborhoods, communities, and other groupings of sociological importance.

3. Rural Social Psychology.

The studies in Section 2 above focus chiefly upon the nature, functioning and interrelationships of the organizations, groups, institutions, and services found in rural areas. The present section deals mainly with the relation of individuals to groups of all kinds.

- a. Membership relations problems of rural organizations.
- b. Attitude and opinion studies.
- c. Behavior and participation of farm people with regard to rural organizations of all kinds.

If a study in this field deals with but one organization or one type of organization, it should probably be listed under the appropriate sub-group of Section 2. Where the emphasis is upon membership problems, attitudes, behavior, and other psychological traits of rural people in their social relations toward a variety of organizations or toward their human environment, the study belongs in Section 3. There may be some border-line cases in this connection but the major emphasis or purpose should determine the classification.

4. Rural Social Pathology.

The preceding sections deal chiefly with average or "normal" rural areas. This section deals with subnormal and abnormal social conditions.

- a. General social surveys of retarded or handicapped rural areas.
- b. Studies of rural delinquency, crime, degeneracy, etc.
- c. Rural poor relief and other forms of aid to underprivileged, poverty-stricken, subnormal, and otherwise unfortunate persons and families.

If the emphasis of a given study is upon a particular organization or group rather than upon an area or upon pathological conditions, these studies may be classified under appropriate subheads of Section 2; otherwise they belong in the present Section.

Appendix II

Some References on Interpretation of Social Data

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